critical digest

Vol. III No. 5 October 2, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

N.Y.Openings This Week

The Gioconda Smiles-Lyceum, 10/3/50. Aldous Huxley play starring Basil Rathbone and Valerie Taylor. Directed and produced by Shepard Traube. Pardon our French-Broadway, 10/5/50. Olson and Johnson's latest with music by Victor Young, lyrics by Edward Heyman. Cast features producers plus Denise Darcel, Marty May, June Johnson and Bill Shirley.

Daily Critics Rate the New Plays

Affairs of State-Royale, 9/25/50. Critics were divided on Louis Verneuil's first American play. Some considered it pleasant drawing room comedy, others thought it was antique French farce. Chapman, News, called it "sex comedy". But all were pleased with the fine acting in cast headed by Reginald Owen and Celeste Holm. Question once again was if vehicle was strong enough for full evening's entertainment. Barnes, Herald Tribune, and Pollock, Compass, thought it was. Chapman and Coleman, Mirror, and O'Connor, Journal American found contemporary values in the predictable script. Watts, Post, thought the play was lugubrious, lethargic and uneventful. Chapman wished that Miss Holm had been allowed to sing a number or two.

Southern Exposure-Biltmore, 9/26/50. Owen Crump's comedy of life in Natchez should have stood in Dallas. This was the general opinion of daily critics on folk play directed by Margo Jones, which had been big hit at her Dallas Theatre. But critics fell in love with three newcomers. Betty Green Little, Mary Finney and Pat Crowley were applauded by even those who thought the script horrible. The latter young actress was chosen by many as a "comer". Chapman was the sole critic to enjoy the play itself, while several others thought it might be successful as a little theatre production or as a Grade B movie. Dash, Women's Wear, saw possibilities in the subject matter which weren't fully realized. Columnist John McClain subbed for Garland, Journal American.

Black Chiffon-48th Street Theatre, 9/27/50. Lesley Storm's psychological drama was saluted by most critics as the first "real" play of the season. All English cast starring Flora Robson was considered superb. Several critics did complain that cast didn't speak loud enough, but Coleman expects this situation to improve once the cast becomes acclimated. Barnes and Chapman didn't think the play was interesting enough even for Miss Robson's talents. While Atkinson, Times, thought it proved that style can be ample substitute for genius. Chapman prefers to remember Robson as Lady Macbeth. Anthony Ireland and Raymond Huntley were also highly praised. Direction by Charles Hickman was credited with much of the success of the drama.

Weekly Reviewers Rate British Play

Daphne Laureola-Music Box, 9/18/50. James Bridie's play fared better at hands of weekly critics than it did with daily reviewers. Seven magazine critics gave play starring Edith Evans and Cecil Parker "pro" votes. Clurman, New Republic, and Marshall, Nation, thought play had limited appeal to those who seek civilized, intelligent entertainment. Critics of Time, New Yorker and George Jean Nathan panned play as unworthy of talents of Evans. Latter wished author would spend more time on his next play.

News & Notes

The Amazing Adele due to open October 9, cancelled because of rights difficulties...Drama Critics Circle joined fight against "blacklisting" in entertainment industry.

Copyright 1950 by T.M. Kraus, Editor 505 5th Ave., N.Y.C. 17 $10 Yearly

- -

' A Key To NYC Criticism At A Glance '

- -

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

1. NY Times
2. NY Herald Tribune
3. NY News
4. NY Mirror
5. NY Compass (PM, Star)
6. NY Post
7. NY Sun (Morehouse)
8. NY Journal American
9. NY World-Telegram & Sun
10. Brooklyn Eagle
11. Newark News
12. Woman's Wear Daily
13. Daily Worker
14. Wall Street Journal
15. Journal of Commerce
16. George Jean Nathan
17. Morning Telegraph
18. Variety
19. Billboard
20. Theatre Arts
21. Catholic World
22. Commonweal
23. Cue
24. Chr.Sci. Monitor
25. Sat.Review Lit.
26. Newsweek
27. Time
28. Nation
29. New Republic
30. New Yorker

Affairs of State-Royale, 9/25/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-8-9-15. Con: 1-6-10-11-12-14.

Black Chiffon-48th Street Theatre, 9/27/50. Pro: 1-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-15. Con: 3

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-9-13-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29.

Daphne Laureola-Music Box, 9/18/50. Pro: 3-5-8-10-11-12-14-15-18-19-24-26-28-29. Con: 1-4-6-7-9-16-27-30. So-So: 2. None: 13-17-20-21-22-23-25.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfield, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28. So-So: 16-19-22-23-27. None: 25.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.

Kiss Me Kate-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 15. So-So: 2-27-30.

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24- So-So: 13-16-17.

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 4-5-6-7-8-10-11-15-17-19-23. Con: 1-2-12-16-20-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18. None: 9-13-21-22-24-25.

Peter Pan-St. James, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-7-14-19.

Southern Exposure-Biltmore, 9/26/50. Pro: 3. Con: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-14-15.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Tickets Please!-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes, Con: 11-16-27-30. So-So: 26.

Green Room Department

HAWKINS...RATING CODE...Drama reviews by Hawkins, WT&S, are now prefaced by short six point summary of his review. Headings are "Type," " Topic," "Blot," "Mood," and "I Find It."

COLUMN TIPS...Walker still hunting for multimillionare to build new NYC City Center...Morehouse urges commutters to rally forces again for 7 00 PM curtain test...Kilgallen hears that top Broadway actor is turning down all offers because he fears the medium...Winchell tells of John Chapman's new invention, corn flakes in rainbow colors.

SUMMER FINALE...Farther away from large cities, the better the summer stock and the larger the audiences. Conclusion drawn by Stern, Show Business, after completing an 8000 mile tour during which he visited 75 theatres.

TICKET PROBLEMS...Confusion is mild description of Call Me Madam ticket office. McCord, Herald Tribune, explained why early mail orders were returned unfilled. Producers had circularized own direct mail list before placing ads. As result first few months were completely sold out...Theatre News Weekly thinks this is very poor public relations for the entire theatre industry... Chapman, News, looked at both sides of issue stating that the public is no bargain either.

ADD PUN'S...How about "Life with Ethel" for Call Me Madam asks Phillips, WT&S... Sobol, Journal American, invades Phillips territory by suggesting "I'm just wild about Barrie" for Peter Pan and "T.S. Eliot's five foot self" for The Cocktail Party.

BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY...Rice, Post, was more than disappointed by the lack of theatre excitment on West Coast. He had expected to find dozens of good "Off Broadway" groups, but he discovered that only a few were operating.

FUTURE OF DRAMA... These are the good old days of the drama muses Rose, News. Actors, plays and even drinks are better now than they were in "the good old days."...But Rlbert Sherwood thinks drama is finished. He told PEN writer's meeting in Scotland that poetry is the essence of drama, and poetry is impossible in these mechanical times.

MITCHELL PRAISED...Sheaffer, Eagle, adds his vote of approval for Thomas Mitchell's performance as Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. The critic found the play every bit as powerful and overwelming on the third visit as he did on opening night.

FIRST NIGHTERS RATED...Critics Nathan and Brown viewed a woman collecting for a "Leper Colony" during the intermission of Southern Exposure repeats Lyons, Post. "You must admit she picked the right audience," cracked Brown who had seen the same woman at previous first nights.

Random Items

Louis Sheaffer, Eagle, elected to Drama Critics Circle...ANTA TV program to plug Broadway and road shows weekly...Variety survey shows owners of Broadway legitimate theatres earned two million dollars profit last year...T.S. Eliot arrives for nationwide lecture tour...WNEW plans Sunday night "Are You an Angel" program. Show will be broadcast from a producer's home...CBS Bill Leonard "NY AT Play" edition Monday mornings...Claude Bragden theatre designs are on exhibit at the Musuem of the City of New York.

- - - - - - - - - - -

' Interview Round UP '

- - - - - - - - - - -

FLORA ROBSON...Black Chiffon star doesn't see any British invasion of the Broadway stage, she told NBC Voices and Events. Instead it seems like only a fair and civilized exchange of good plays between New York and London. It is through the arts that people learn to know each other.

WOLCOTT GIBBS...Critic-author of Season in the Sun was picked by his New Yorker colleague St. Clair McKelway as the possible successor to Harold Ross, editor in Herald Tribune Sunday Drama article. But McKelway doubts if Gibbs, who wanted to be drama critic in first place, will ever return to editorial side now that he has had his first taste of playwriting.

MORTON GOTTLIEB...Ambitious 29 year old producer of Mad Money detailed his money raising methods to Theatre News Weekly. He is trying for tie-ins with the companies mentioned in the script. Thus a scene set in front of an airline would be an invitation for an airline to put money in the production.

CLARE TREE MAJOR...Children's Theatre producer is starting her 27th season by sending out seven complete productions to tour the country, she told Sheaffer, Eagle, at her Pleasantville workshop. She feels there is no more potent medium for education than the theatre. Her aim is to bring to her audiences the right kind of material.

OWEN CRUMP...Southern Exposure playwright admitted to MBS Sardis that he hadn't been to sleep since he arrived in New York 24 hours before his play opened. But he planned to catch up on the plane returning home the day after the opening.

IRA GERSHWIN...Brother of famous composer told CBS Bill Humphrey in Paris that he thinks his brother was successful writing hit songs for shows because he loved to study and work. They worked two solid years on Porgy and Bess without a letup.

CHARLOTTE GREENWOOD...Out of this World star is returning to N.Y.stage after a 20 year absence she told Morehouse, WT&S. She rambled about her many road tours which took her from Portland, Oregon to Portland, Maine. Her spare moments during rehearsals are spent riding a bicycle in the park.

MR. BOOKIE...Wilson, Post, interviewed a Broadway bookie, who he called "Mr. L". He doubted that New York's new police commissioner Thomas Murphy could do anything to break up the gifts now being paid to N.Y. cops by bookies as protection. The gifts include year round tickets to "South Pacific" whenever they want them.

- - - - - - -

' Chit Chat '

- - - - - - -

Lily Christine, the Cat Girl in Peep Show has had over 5,000 requests for photographs since the show opened...Jacob Weiser to teach playwriting at NYC high school of Performing Arts...Abbe Workshop moves permanently to Smithtown Branch, L.I.... League of N.Y.Theatres to study press agents survey...Ethel Merman will not appear on RCA album of Call Me Madam; she is signed exclusively with Decca...A half a million people attended the 1950 Passion Play in Oberammergau; the next play will be held in 1960...September 15th Vogue featured tips on the coming plays in the form of a tip sheet...Call Me Madam producers trying to weed out first nighters, who caught the musical out of town... While Frank Loesser, Guys and Dolls producer, is also trying to keep opening night tickets away from the usual first nighters...Giano Carlo-Menotti, The Consul and The Medium have both posted last week notices.